



ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Progress at Arlington

June 2011

OVERVIEW

Arlington National Cemetery is both the most hallowed burial ground of our Nation's fallen and one of the most visited tourist sites in the Washington, DC, area. A fully operational national cemetery since May 1864, Arlington National Cemetery conducts an average of 27 funerals each workday--final farewells to fallen heroes from the fronts of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to veterans of World War II, the Korean conflict, Vietnam and the Cold War and their family members.

One year ago, an investigation by the Army Inspector General revealed several issues at Arlington National Cemetery. In the past year, the new leadership team has taken steps to address them by employing new chain of custody procedures, implementing a financial management system and contracting process, rebuilding the workforce, overhauling the automated interment scheduling system and improving the facilities and infrastructure on the grounds of the cemetery. In this next year, leadership will focus on using technology to develop programs and products that will bring the American public closer to Arlington National Cemetery.

Progress continues toward correcting the issues at Arlington National Cemetery and maintaining its position as America's premier military cemetery and sacred treasure in American history. Below is a summary of the progress made since the new leadership took over on June 10, 2010.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Arlington National Cemetery has gone to a paperless system and is digitizing all of the older paper records. The system is backed up in multiple locations to ensure that the records are protected and available for future generations. Arlington has begun a comprehensive effort to reconcile all of the data related to burial records. As part of the accountability efforts, Arlington is digitally capturing the front and back of each marker of the more than 330,000 that are interred or inurned at Arlington National Cemetery. The effort to digitally map the cemetery through aerial photography and global positioning technology is under way. The images from the headstones will be matched up with digitized paper records and compared for accuracy.

CHAIN OF CUSTODY

Every funeral at Arlington National Cemetery receives our full attention to detail. Daily operations are critical to maintaining one of the unique hallmarks of Arlington National Cemetery. The cemetery has implemented new procedures for chain of custody to maintain positive identification of casketed or cremated remains from the time they arrive at the cemetery until they are secured in their final resting place. Arlington now uses concrete liners similar to the grave liner used for caskets, which eliminates the risk of the urn being unintentionally removed from its final resting place. Arlington is the first and only national cemetery using urn liners.

A system of six checks is made by the cemetery representative to ensure positive identification:

- Cemetery representative validates daily interment schedule with family;
- A non-biodegradable tag is affixed to the casket or urn containing the name of the deceased, date of death, date of interment, section and grave number;
- Section and grave number are painted on inside and outside of the grave liner and liner lid;

- The tag is checked with the section and grave number painted on the concrete lid of the grave liner;
- Temporary grave marker contains name, dates, section and grave number; and
- Headstone validation, if applicable.

FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

The Army takes very seriously its stewardship of all aspects of Arlington National Cemetery. Instrumental to fiscal responsibility is disciplined processes and systems for accountability and oversight. Officials implemented an accounting system as well as policies to enhance procurement operations and ensure senior-level staff conduct funds certification. Other oversight measures include creating a system of accountability for all real property and implementing preventive maintenance and repair process.

Additionally, leadership has requested the Army Audit Agency to review the new policies, procedures and practices at the end of this fiscal year to ensure that they are working.

CONTRACTING

Contracted services are a vital and valuable part of the daily operations at Arlington National Cemetery. The current contract requirements have been consolidated in areas that allowed Arlington National Cemetery to gain efficiencies, streamline work efforts and limit the contractor footprint on the grounds. Arlington recompleted all of its contracts, reducing the number of contracts from 28 to 16. For every contract, there is a trained, certified contracting officer representative to oversee and monitor performance. Arlington now holds contractors accountable for services. Previously, there were no certified contracting officer representatives at Arlington. To ensure the greater number of contracts receive proper legal oversight, the new leadership lowered the threshold for legal review of contracts to \$100K, from \$500K.

REBUILDING THE WORKFORCE

A number of professionals from a wide array of career fields are needed to successfully accomplish the mission at Arlington National Cemetery. Since June 10, 2010, Arlington has had a 30-percent turnover in its workforce, which has enabled greater flexibility to bring in trained, seasoned professionals. Arlington National Cemetery also has been authorized additional positions and has filled nine critical positions, such as the deputy superintendent, cemetery and customer service representatives. Arlington National Cemetery now has a dedicated engineering staff to address and maintain the current facilities and infrastructure.

In terms of rebuilding the workforce, leadership has implemented industry-standard procedures, training, and equipment that equal the best national cemeteries. In addition, the superintendent and his leadership team are out daily among the workforce providing direction and guidance while holding supervisors, team leaders and the workforce accountable for operations. The Army now has an agreement with the VA that allows Arlington employees to enroll in the training center.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The care that families deserve in their time of need requires a prompt, compassionate, and professional response. To better serve the families, Arlington National Cemetery implemented a new call center on December 13, 2010 designed to establish a uniform standard for scheduling. The call center streamlines all customer interactions. The trained, dedicated team of agents answer, triage, resolve and document all calls.

- 30,001 total calls since system implemented
- 240 calls per week day
- 47 new scheduling requests per day

- Working to establish feedback mechanisms for customer concerns

Arlington National Cemetery has begun operating six days a week to improve customer service and gain operational efficiencies. In order to meet the demand for funeral services, Arlington has started scheduling services on Saturday for the first time in the cemetery's history. Saturday services are for dependents and veterans who waive military honors.

SERVICES/CEREMONIES

What makes Arlington so unique is that it is the only cemetery in the nation that performs gravesite burials and renders full military honors. Arlington National Cemetery holds an average 27-30 funeral services a day. More than 3,000 ceremonies take place at Arlington National Cemetery each year. Visiting dignitaries often come to Arlington National Cemetery to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. Arlington is also host to more than 4 million visitors each year who come to pay their respects and explore the rich history that is Arlington National Cemetery.

Since June 10, 2010 Arlington has performed more than:

- 6,583 funeral services
- 3,547 wreath ceremonies
- 55 memorial services

THE WAY AHEAD

As Arlington leadership continues to move forward with addressing the issues of the past, they are also preparing for the future. Arlington National Cemetery is moving forward with expanding the existing Columbarium. Under current estimates, the cemetery expects to exhaust its availability for inurnments in niche spaces in FY 2016. The addition of Columbarium Court 9 will add approximately 20,300 niches to the inventory, which will extend available niche space out to FY 2024. Arlington plans to begin construction in late June/early July 2011 and expects Columbarium Court 9 to be operational by November 2012.

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